

## RELATIVE CLAUSES IN HINDI: A FUNCTIONAL APPROACH\*

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### *Abstract*

Hindi Relative clauses seem to appear in three positions, preceding the main clause, following the main clause, and after the definite Noun Phrase. On the basis of structural and meaning similarity, relative clauses in these positions have been considered to be variants. Similarly, there is a great deal of flexibility in the order of constituents within relative clause construction. This paper examines relative clause construction with a discourse point of view and argues that many of these constructions are not simply stylistic variants but serve specific discourse functions.

### I. Introduction

Within transformational theory, various analyses of relative clause formation (RCF) have been proposed for English as well as South Asian languages,<sup>1</sup> including Hindi (see Masica 1972 and Kachru 1973). The description first proposed postulated underlying NP-S or sentential embedding configuration as the source of relative clause types, which can be referred to as embedding analysis (e.g., Lees 1963, Smith 1964 and 1974). An alternate description of RCF incorporated underlying S+S or sentential conjunct configurations, referred to as conjunct analysis (Thompson 1970, 1971). In addition, a third description analyses restrictive and nonrestrictive relatives as derivatives of sentential embeddings and sentential conjuncts respectively (e.g., Lakoff 1965, 1970 and 1977, Ross 1967, Bach 1968, Aissen 1972, Schachter 1973).

As for the relative clauses in Indo-Aryan languages, especially Hindi, Kachru (1968) has used basically the NP-S configuration. Similarly, Susan Donaldson (1971) using the same approach explained the movement of elements in restrictive relative clauses in Hindi. However, the relative construction in Indo-Aryan, including Hindi and Marathi, is complex. The structures of both the restrictive as well as nonrestrictive relative clauses cannot be explained by any or all the configurations mentioned above as they are part of sentence based grammars. In these grammars, the sentence is considered to be the ultimate unit of study. Such grammars prove inadequate simply because they study sentences in isolation. Many sentences in isolation, though completely grammatical, give too little information for complete interpretation.

This paper examines both restrictive and nonrestrictive relative clauses in Hindi. The research shows that the adequate syntactic description of these clauses must take into account some discourse considerations.<sup>2</sup> The discourse functions of both the restrictive as well as nonrestrictive relative clauses help us understand their complex syntactic and semantic nature. Further more, on the basis of their discourse functions, the paper proposes a continuum between these constructions, i.e., from restrictive (identifying) to restrictive (defining), to restrictive (describing) to restrictive (appositive).

## II. Relative Clauses (RRC) in Hindi

The Hindi relative clause construction consists of two clauses containing coreferential NP's. The relative clause precedes the main clause and contains the relative NP (jo aadmi, jo laRki, etc.) and the main clause which follows the relative clause contains the coreferential NP (yah usko, etc.). The relative particle j is attached to the relative (modifying) NP and the correlative pronoun, which is usually the same as the demonstrative pronoun, occurs before the referent or (relativized or modified NP). These relative and correlative pronouns with j<sup>-3</sup> and y, respectively, function as deictics and assume the features gender and number of the NPs they modify. They derive their case marking from their functions in their respective clauses. The coreferential NP's do not have to have the same syntactic or semantic functions. See the following examples. The NP's in both the clauses of (1) are subjects, whereas, in (2) they are subject and direct object respectively. In (3), the relative NP is subject and the main NP is indirect object. In this construction, the adverb yahaa precedes the relative NP yah. Hindi allows the deletion of relative NP. This results in co-relative clauses, as in the example (4).

- [1] jo aadmi yahaa kaam kartaa hai yah aadmi meraa bhaai hai [Rel. Sub, Main Sub]

{who} man there work does {the} man my brother is  
 {a} {that}  
 'The man who works there is my brother.'  
 (A man works there that man is my brother)

- [2] jo aam pulaa thaa yah maine khaayaa. [Rel: Sub, Main DO]  
 which mango yellow was the (that one) I ate  
 'I ate the (that) mango which was yellow'

- [3] yahaa jo laRki paRh rahi thi usko maine kitaab dii [Rel. Sub, Main IO]  
 here who girl reading was to-her I book gave  
 'I gave the book to the girl who was reading here'

- [4] yahaa jo paRh rahi thi usko maine kitaab dii  
 here who reading was to-her I book gave  
 'I gave the book to the one who was reading here'

Hindi does not seem to allow the reduced relative clauses as in (5). Nor does it have the mechanism to produce reduced relative construction comparable to the Marathi examples as in (6), and (7).

- [5] \*yahaa paR rahi thi usko maine kitaab dii.  
 here reading was to-her I book gave  
 'I gave the book to her who was reading here'

Marathi

- [6] itha waacat aslelyaa mulilaa mihi pustak dila.  
 here reading was to-girl I book gave  
 'I gave the book to the girl who was reading here'  
 (I gave the book to the reading girl here)

- [7] *itha waacat asNaarila mii pustak dila*  
 here reading-(female) I book gave  
 'I gave the book to the girl who was reading here'  
 (I gave the book to the reading girl here)

The complexity of the relative construction has been illustrated through examples, (4), (5), (6) and (7). However, I have excluded the discussion of the headless reduced relative clauses as well as participial constructions from this paper. Now consider the position of relative clauses

### III. The Position of Relative Clauses

#### A. Relative Clause Precedes the main clause:

- [8] The man who is standing there is Ram's friend.

*jo aadmi vahaa khaRaa hai vah aadmi raamkaa mitra hai*  
 who (a) man there standing is the (that) man ram's friend is  
 'A man is standing there, that man is Ram's friend'

- [9] *jo aadmi vahaa khaRaa hai vah raamkaa mitra hai*  
 who man there standing is he (the) Ram's friend is  
 'The man who is standing there is Ram's friend'

- [10] ? *jo vahaa khaRaa hai vah aadmi raamkaa mitra hai*  
 who there standing is the man ram's friend is  
 {a} {that}  
 ? 'A man is Ram's friend who is standing there'

- [11] *jo vahaa khaRaa hai vah raamkaa mitra hai*  
 who there standing is he ram's friend is  
 'The one who is standing there is Ram's friend'

The clause order A in which the relative clause precedes the main clause seems to be dominant. The examination of S-initial relative clauses in the actual texts, which I did in my paper (Junghare 1988) on the basis of computer print out, showed that they occur twice in proportion to S-initial main clauses. Hence I assume that this clause order is unmarked. The function of the S-initial relative clause is to establish the identity of the noun to which they refer. An individual or a thing is mentioned for the first time. The relative clause provides information by means of which the referent of the NP is identified. Whereas the function of the Main-Relative clause construction seems to be assertative (Yael Zav and Peter Cole 1974). Extraposed relative clauses assert some attribute of an individual who is already identified. Let us apply the test of questioning to determine whether a particular part of a sentence is asserted or presupposed.

- [8] --- (cannot be questioned)  
 [9] --- (cannot be questioned)

The fact that the sentences in [8] and [9] cannot be elicited by a question suggests that the relative clause in this construction does not involve presuppositions. In fact the addressee

is assumed not to know what the referent is. The speaker simply introduces the subject as a topic or conversation. In [8], both NP's (*jo aadmii-vah aadmi*) are kept for clarity and emphasis, in [9] the second NP is deleted. This is the normal case. Notice sentence [10] is questionable, although not ungrammatical. The absence of the NP in the relative clause, but its presence in the main clause violates the function of the sentence-initial relative clause, which is to identify an NP. One has to introduce the noun in the first clause (relative clause), then talk about it in the second clause (main clause). The function of *jo* is not that of a relative pronoun. It simply marks a topic in a conversation. The colloquial English equivalent for sentences [8] through [11] would be

**'There's a man standing there and he is Ram's friend.'**

#### **B. Relative clause follows the main clause**

- [12] *vah aadmi raam kaa mitra hai jo aadmi vahaa khaRaa hai*  
 the man ram's friend is who man there standing is  
 'The (that) man is Ram's friend who is standing there'
- [13] *vah aadmi raam kaa mitra hai jo vahaa khaRaa hai*  
 the (that) man ram's friend is who there standing is  
 'That man is Ram's friend the one who is standing there'
- [14] \**vah raam kaa mitra hai jo aadmi vahaa khaRaa hai*  
 he ram's friend is who man there standing is  
 \*'He is Ram's friend the man who is standing there'
- [15] *vah raam kaa mitra hai jo vahaa khaRaa hai*  
 he ram's friend is who there standing is  
 'He is Ram's friend who is standing there'
- [16] *vah raam kaa mitra hai jo vahaa khaRaa hai, vah [Res]*  
 he ram's friend is who there standing is that one  
 'He is Ram's friend the one who is standing there'

The examples [12] through [16] show the reverse order in which the main clause occurs in the sentence initial position followed by the relative clause. The function of the Main-Relative construction seems to be assertative (Ziv & Cole 1974). The function of the relative clauses in this case is to assert some attribute of an individual who is already identified.

Notice the sentence in [14] is questionable in light of discourse. In [14] the occurrence of *vah* in the sentence-initial main clause implies that the discourse is quite advanced and the NP has been specified a long time before. Therefore it is awkward to reintroduce the NP in the sentence-final relative clause (the clause that occurs after the main clause) the function of which is to give more information about the specified noun.

The Relative Clause Construction (RCC) in which the main clause is followed by the relative clause involves presuppositions. In the examples [13] through [16] the addressee is believed to be asking more information about Ram's friend or about the specific man. On one hand the speaker defines Ram's friend in terms of a standing man, suggesting the correlative structure in which both the nouns are equal. On the other hand, the second interpretation of these sentences is that the speaker specifies the man as Ram's friend but provides additional information about him, that he is standing. In this case the relative

clause, the additional information, assumes the subordinate status. Thus there are two interpretations of these sentences (1) Correlative-restrictive and (2) Descriptive-non restrictive. However, the head NP is marked [+definite] in this type of RRC. The two interpretations can be elicited by the following two questions as in [a] and [b]

- [12-16] a **kaun aadmii raam kaa mitra hai?**  
           which man ram's friend is  
           'Which man is Ram's friend?'

- b **vah aadmii kaun hai?**  
    that man who is  
    'Who is that man?'

In sentences [12] through [16], the addressee is believed to have some information about the referent. In these examples the addressee is believed to be asking information either about Ram's friend or about the specific man. Sentences [12]-[16] might be similar in meaning to the focus construction-pseudo cleft in English. Schachter (1973) has pointed out similarities between restrictive relative clauses and such focus constructions as cleft and pseudocleft in a number of languages, such as Akan, Hausa, and Ilonggo.

The sentence-final relative clause which occurs after the main clause and provides additional information about the definite NP of the main clause is surely non-restrictive relative construction as can be seen in the following example

- [17] **shaam raam kaa mitra hai, jo vahaa khaRaa hai** [Non-Res]  
       shyam ram's friend is who there standing is  
       'Shyam is Ram's friend, who is standing there.'

In [17], Shyam is a proper noun. It is a definite description, and definite descriptions cannot be identified. They can further, be described. Therefore, [17] is an instance of a non-restrictive clause.

### C. Relative clause occurs after the definite NP:

The man, who is standing there, is my brother.

- [18] **vah aadmii, jo vahaa khaRaa hai vah meraa bhaai hai** [Non-Res]  
       the (that) man who there standing is he my brother is  
       'The man, who is standing there, is my brother'
- [19] **vah, jo vahaa khaRaa hai, vah meraa bhaai hai**  
       he who there standing is that one my brother is  
       'He, who is standing there, is my brother'
- [20] **?vah jo vahaa khaRaa hai, vah aadmii meraa bhaai hai**  
       he who there standing is that man my brother is  
       'He, the man who is standing there, is my brother'
- [21] **vah, jo aadmii vahaa khaRaa hai vah meraa bhaai hai**  
       that one who man there standing is he my brother is  
       'That one, the man who is standing there is my brother'

- [22] vah, jo vahaa khaRaa hai vah mera bhaai hai  
 that one the one there standing is he my brother is  
 'That one, the one who is standing there is my brother'

The third type of RCC in which the relative clause occurs after the definite noun or a pronoun is not a common construction in Indo-Aryan.<sup>4</sup> This is due to the fact that it is used later on in the discourse when the speaker assumes the need for an explanation about some prior information which has been established between the speaker and the hearer (at least, as judged by the speaker). Examples [18] and [19] can be questioned as

- [23] vah aadmi, jo vahaa khaRaa hai, vah kaun hai?  
 that man who there standing is he who is  
 'who is that man who is standing there?'

- [24] vah, jo vahaa khaRaa hai, vah kaun hai?  
 the one who there standing is he who is  
 'Who is he, the one who is standing there?'

The speaker feels the need of referring to the individual, thing or object which has been either presupposed or already mentioned in the earlier part of the discourse. In any case, the NP to which the reference is made is followed by a pause which is indicated by a comma (,) in these examples. This NP does not form a part of the sentence. The occurrence of this NP in the pre-S position becomes a complete expression or entity by itself.

This phenomenon is similar to the Sanskrit use of a definite noun in the vocative case. That the vocative NP does not form a part of the sentence is supported by independent evidence (De Vries 1975). In Vedic Sanskrit, the main verb is normally unaccented except in a sentence initial position. However, if the main verb immediately follows an initial vocative element, it receives accent. It seems appropriate that the sentence which occurs after an NP but preceded by a pause should be considered as an instance of non-restrictive relative clause construction. Notice the example (22) in which the usual relative sentence occurs after the deictic or anaphoric determiner *vah*. The sentence [20] is questionable as it violates the function of the sentence initial relative clause. In this construction the main NP, *aadmi* 'man', is identified in the sentence-final main clause instead of the sentence-initial relative clause.

The RCC construction of the type C, [18] through [22], occurs in the advanced stage of discourse and hence we find more use of deictic or anaphoric pronouns for making reference. Notice the example [22] for the use of deictic or anaphoric pronouns for making reference. If the RCC is viewed as the discourse continuum, [22] stands closer to the end and sentence [8] at the beginning. The Relative Clause Construction can be presented in the form of continuum in the following way

Identifying Rel Clause--Defining Rel Clause--Descriptive Rel--Non-Restr Rel Clause<sup>5</sup>

#### IV. Variation within a Relative Clause Construction

The examination of the surface representation of the Hindi Relative Clause construction reveals its elaborate nature. I have stated only those variants that relate to the position of relative clauses. If we take into account the syntactic functions of NP's and their movement, and the movements of other elements within clauses guided by discourse

considerations, we will be overwhelmed with the number of variants. Consider the following variants

**'The girl whom I saw here was a washerwoman.'**

- [25] **jis laRku ko maine yahaa dekhaa, vah dhobin thi.**  
 who girl I here saw that one washer-woman was **OR**
- [26] **maine jis laRku ko yahaa dekhaa, vah dhobin thi**  
 I who girl here saw that one washer-woman was **OR**
- [27] **maine yahaa jis laRkii ko dekhaa, vah dhobin thi**  
 I here who girl saw that one washer-woman was **OR**
- [28] **yahaa maine jis laRkil ko dekhaa, vah dhobin thi**  
 here I who girl saw that one washer-woman was

The movement of elements in relative clauses is in accordance with the functions of word order in general. The word order variation is motivated by various discourse functions: topicalization, marking of definiteness and specificity, contrast and afterthought expressions. This flexibility in the movement of constituents can be explained by the very nature of the relative construction. We have earlier noted that the relative construction of the Rel-Main type introduces new information. In starting a conversation the speaker must choose the constituent order in presenting the new information to his addressee. The speaker may choose any one of the variants.

## V Underlying Representation of Relative Clauses

We often find confusion in the analyses of the restrictive and nonrestrictive relative clauses. The problem of recognizing restrictive from non-restrictive relative construction holds true for Hindi, Marathi, and other Indo-Aryan languages in general. This observation finds explanation in the claim made by Thompson (1971: 87) that the differences between relative clause types are structurally superfluous and "are not of the sort that ought to be represented structurally, instead they are differences representing a speaker's decision about how to present to the hearer information present in the underlying representation." The result is that all kinds of relative clauses—restrictive, non-restrictive, semi-restrictive, semi-nonrestrictive, etc., can be handled under conjunct analysis of RCC. Thus the underlying S+S representation can handle not only RCC's under A and C but also under B. But if we adopt embedding analysis, we will have to have three distinct underlying representations as the RCC under B cannot be adequately handled by the NP-S representation. This results in an elaboration of descriptive apparatus.

The insight into the restrictive-non-restrictive distinction is provided by a system of natural logic as applied to linguistic analysis (Lakoff 1970). This means restrictive relatives function to identify a variable NP while non-restrictives refer to a constant NP. Our RCC's under A identify a variable NP, and RCC's under C refer to or provide additional information about the constant NP. However, RCC's under B either identify (reidentify) or refer to a constant NP. This can be related to a discourse setting. At the beginning of a discourse all NP's are variable, and hence the speaker identifies one NP in terms of another and uses restrictive relatives. As discourse continues, some of the NP's become definite or constant as presuppositions are gradually established. In the process, some NP's fluctuate--

at one point they are variable and then become constant and again variable. To a large extent, RCC is constrained by the variable-Constant-Variable. In this shift from variable-to-constant-to-variable, if not monitored properly, the restrictive-nonrestrictive distinction neutralizes (Smith 1974). Our Hindi RCC's under B are an example of this phenomenon. They are neither restrictive nor nonrestrictive. They are neutral. It appears that conjunct analysis as opposed to embedding analysis of RCC is better equipped to handle the three-way distinction that occurs in Hindi RCC's.

## VI. Evidence against NP-S representation

(i) Noting the nature of RCC's in Hindi, especially the neutral construction, I have suggested their underlying representation as S+S. There is also evidence that goes against the NP-S representation for Hindi RCC's. The Hindi RCC is correlative in which NP's have equal status and they are modified with reference to each other. The correlative construction in Hindi like Hittite (Downing 1974) observes a condition of relevance or inclusion rather than the identity of reference required in embedded clauses.

- [29] jis aadmi ne ghar jalaa diyaa, us vyakti ne paaThshaalaa bhii jalaa dii  
 who man house burned that person school too burned  
 'The man who burned the house (that person) burned the school, too'

vyakti 'person' is coreferential with aadmi 'man'. It is not identical to it.

(ii) The coreferentiality also creates a problem of ambiguity. The S-initial main clause contains two NP's, and the following relative clause also contains two more NP's. In such a construction the NP in the relative clause may refer to two NP's in the main clause.

- [30] ghoRii saRak par cal rahi thi, jis par log baith the  
 mare street on walking was which people sat  
 'The horse on which the people sat was walking on the street.'  
 'The horse was walking on that street where people were sitting.'

In the example [30], jis par can refer to either ghoRii 'horse' or to saRak 'street'.

(iii) Another case of ambiguity can be seen in which the NP in the relative clause refers not only to one specific NP in the main clause but also refers to the entire S. (Donaldson 1971)

- [31] jis dukaandaar ke paise gum gaye us ke baare me maine sunaa  
 which shopkeeper's money was lost, about him [it] I heard  
 'I heard about the shopkeeper who lost the money.'  
 'I heard about the shopkeeper losing the money.'

us ke baare me refers to either dukaandaar 'shopkeeper' or to the whole incident. Under the embedding analysis, the ambiguities that occur in [30] and [31] cannot be accounted for. Therefore, the underlying representation of Hindi RCC's has to be S+S.



## VII. Conclusion

After close examination, it seems that the Relative Clause Construction in Hindi can best be explained with respect to their discourse functions. It seems that the speaker uses the Relative-Main clause order when he introduces the topic of conversation and when he assumes no knowledge on the part of his addressee. The Main-Relative construction, on the other hand, is used later in the conversation when the Noun Phrase is already identified. The relative clause that occurs after the definite NP provides additional description or information about the NP. Similarly, the movement of constituents in relative clauses is consistent with the discourse functions of word order.

This paper claims a three-way distinction between the Relative Clause Construction Non-definite but identifying Relative Construction, Definite-Descriptive Construction, and Descriptive Appositive Construction. The distinction is made on the basis of their semantic and discourse function. It is suggested that Hindi forms a continuum which begins with restrictive relative clauses and ends with non-restrictive relative clauses, and somewhere in between lie the neutral clauses which are neither completely restrictive nor completely non-restrictive. The paper also provides additional evidence regarding coreferentiality and problems related with it that argues against the embedding (NP-S) analysis. Though the paper suggests the conjunct (S+S) analysis of the relative clause structure, its adequacy needs to be studied from experimental and developmental viewpoints.

## NOTES

<sup>†</sup>In transcription of Hindi sentences I have used capital letters to represent retroflex consonants, double vowels to stand for long vowels, an h following a consonant to represent aspiration, sh for the palatal sibilant, R for ṛ, Rh for ṛh and (-) over the vowel for nasalization.

<sup>1</sup>Relative clauses in South Asian Languages have been analyzed by Colin Masica. However, his approach is comparative and descriptive rather than analytical. Relativization in Hindi has been studied by M. H. Klaiman. Similarly, I have analyzed Marathi restrictive relative clauses with the transformational approach in 1973.

<sup>2</sup>Indo-Aryan syntax cannot be explained without looking into discourse strategies these languages use. Please see my paper, "Discourse Considerations for Marathi and Hindi syntax."

<sup>3</sup>The relative pronouns jo, us have been treated as topic markers. The idea of treating them as topic markers comes from Carol Raman's treatment of the Hittite relative clauses. They function as deictics and topic markers.

<sup>4</sup>The occurrence of the relative clause after the definite Noun Phrase both in Hindi and Marathi may be due to the influence of the English language, especially in written discourse.

<sup>5</sup>Relative construction in other Indo-Aryan languages can also be explained by the relative clause continuum that is proposed in this paper.

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